

Fallen Streaky Bay soldier to be remembered on the Western Front

It has taken 100 years and three generations, but fallen Streaky Bay World War I soldier Private Charles Gordon Williams will be remembered with a new burial site in Belgium.

Private Williams was killed in action on October 5, 1917, aged 19 but it was not until last year that the president of the Fallen Diggers organisation which researches the graves of unknown soldiers and identifies them, Dennis Frank, made contact with the Williams family to say his remains had been found.

The organisation researched documents and had four previously unknown soldiers, including Private Williams, exhumed from one grave at Tyne Cot Cemetery and identified.

Private Williams was born on July 31, 1898 after his parents, James Williams and Ellen Alexandra, had moved from Curramulka to farm on the West Coast in the 1880s.

Mr Williams lived in Smoky Bay and then moved to Pantoulbie to attend school at Streaky Bay and later farm with his parents. Pantoulbie remains a Williams' farm after more than 100 years, with a niece, Vida Thompson, and now a second cousin, Ken Williams, the other owners.

Tyne Cot is located in western Belgium and was captured by the third Australian division on the night Mr Williams was killed and is now the largest Commonwealth War Cemetery.

The four interments will be in individual graves with their own headstone and will be conducted with full military honours. A military chaplain will read prayers at the graveside.

Mr Williams' headstone will have the words of his mother, which were written on the back of a postcard when his belongings were returned in late 1917, reading "our darling boy".

Mr Williams' memory is honoured on a window at the Streaky Bay school, as well as the local RSL monument, on a panel on the Menin gate, the SA War Memorial and the War Memorial in Canberra.

He is also remembered by various West Coast nieces and nephews, great nieces and nephews, and cousins, many of who carry the names Gordon and Charles.

